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spirit — to use an objectionable but useful word — of the sociologist. And he was absolutely the first among American scholars to realize that even in America there has been no breach of continuity ; that the New England town was but the English town of the seventeenth century, planted amid new conditions ; and that neither it nor its offspring can be fully understood until we penetrate the mystery of the origin of mediæval serfdom.

W. J. ASHLEY.

Les Archives de l'Histoire de France. Par CH.-V. LANGLOIS ET H. STEIN. Première Partie. Paris, Alphonse Picard, 1891-1892. — xvi, 608 pp.

This work is the first of a series of manuals of historical bibliography which the firm whose imprint appears upon the volume proposes to publish. The object of the series is wholly praiseworthy and it affords another proof of the thoroughly intelligent interest which the French are taking in their national history. That part of the work before us which has already been issued gives, with introduction and explanations, a brief survey of the national archives of France, including under that term not only the documents deposited in the Hôtel Soubise, but those remaining in the offices of the various ministries — War, Marine, Foreign Affairs, etc. In it are also described the archives of the departments, of the municipalities, of the hospitals, and at the end a great variety of collections still in the possession of the courts, of various administrative bureaus, of ecclesiastical bodies, and of private individuals throughout the country. Reference is made to the printed catalogues and calendars of these archives, to those still in manuscript, and to the most important historical works and articles in learned reviews which have been based on research made in the archives. In the two parts still to be published the authors will in like manner describe the French archives deposited in foreign countries and those to be found in the great libraries both of France and of other nations. The authors are experts in archivistic science and administration. Their information has been obtained by personal inquiry and by correspondence with local archivists, and in all cases accuracy has been sought. A vast amount of information has been compressed into these pages concerning the material condition, the administration and the contents of the archives. A thoroughly reliable handbook is thus being prepared for the use of investigators in every department of French history.

In a previous number of this QUARTERLY (March, 1892, p. 181) attention was called to the wealth of historic material in the French national archives. But they contain only a fragment of the entire manuscript

sources. When this manual is completed it will be possible to obtain a vague conception of the nation's records in their totality, so far at least as they have survived the ravages of time and of revolution. It will probably be found that at least among the archives Paris has not been the whole of France. For the illustration of all periods of her history the materials in the departmental and other local depositories appear to be quite as important as those in the care of the central government. In amount they are of course vastly greater, both for ancient and revolutionary France. For example, in the departmental records are the *procès verbaux* of the provincial estates, the cartularies of many of the abbeys, the records of the seneschalships, bailiwicks, provostships, mayoralties, seigniories, admiralties and other local subdivisions of the feudal régime. These are supplemented in a thousand ways by the records of the bishoprics and chapters and those of the noble families. In the municipal archives will be found the charters and franchises granted by the kings and the seigniors, the proceedings of the municipal councils, and of the officials in the various departments of commercial administration. To the red books, the black books, the yellow books, the green books of the towns the student of municipal history must go as the ultimate sources of information concerning city domains, fairs, markets, trades, public works, taxes, courts. In the municipal archives he will also find the records of the parishes, the registers of births, deaths and marriages, of many of the hospitals, convents, church buildings and charities. In them, as well as among the departmental records, he will find a great variety of material concerning the first revolution, such as proceedings of local clubs and of representatives of the central revolutionary authorities *en mission*. Among the municipalities he will find the records of Aix, Marseilles, Dijon, Perigueux, Toulouse, Reims, Amiens, Arras and St. Omer exceptionally rich. Among the departments those of the South (ancient Languedoc and Provence), and of the North, particularly of ancient Flanders, are the richest. The administration of most of these has been improved during recent years and their manuscripts have been increased by private gifts. Some of the local nobility and clergy have shown themselves very liberal in this regard.

The object of the authors of this work has been not only to prepare a catalogue, but to influence for good the administration of the French archives. The problem, how a nation can best secure the records of its past and preserve them for the use of its scholars, is not easy of solution. The archives of France, as of every other modern nation, are scattered in public and private collections through the length and breadth of its own territory, while not the least important part of them are in the keeping of foreign governments. It would surely serve the

interests of scholars, if all of these in the originals could be gathered into one vast collection at the national capital. Untold labor and expense would be saved to students, and it would no longer be thought necessary to write a volume or brace of volumes to serve as the casket for each scrap of new material which may be found. The student of history under the present competitive system is buried beneath a flood of new books, and in many cases it must be said that they individually add very little to the sum of human knowledge. Centralized archives would not prevent the publication of the results of imperfect investigations, or make it possible to write a nation's history once for all, but they would check the excessive multiplication of books. It was the plan of the revolutionists and of Napoleon to institute such a system for France ; but, as conceived by them, it involved the confiscation of the manuscripts both of local and foreign archives and had to be abandoned.

Since 1815 no effort has been made to transfer the departmental or communal archives to Paris, but a central administrative bureau has been created, provided with inspectors, and placed by the decree of March 21, 1884, under the control of the minister of public instruction. At present under its officials the work of cataloguing both national and local archives, and, as far as possible, consolidating the latter, is being earnestly prosecuted. Much has already been done to overcome the carelessness and lethargy of local authorities and to awaken the interest of private individuals, but much still remains to be accomplished. The object of the authors of these volumes is still further to awaken public interest in the archives and to enlist it in support of what seems to be the reasonable policy of the government. Following the opinion of Moreau, historiographer of France at the middle of the last century, they believe that it is not possible to collect in a central depot even copies of all the national records ; but they urge that it is both possible and in the highest degree desirable to gather together for constant use catalogues of all the archives—whether national or local, whether lodged at home or abroad. This is the plan which is being slowly carried into execution by the English government. Its calendars, for foreign papers, and the reports of the Historical Manuscript Commission, for private collections, contain what the French mean by an *inventaire*. Were that plan fully executed for local as well as national archives, the demand of the authors for centralization would be satisfied. To go further than that would, in their opinion, call up serious administrative obstacles. The present work is intended to supply the need of a general survey or inventory till the government shall have met the want in a more thorough and satisfactory manner.

HERBERT L. OSGOOD.